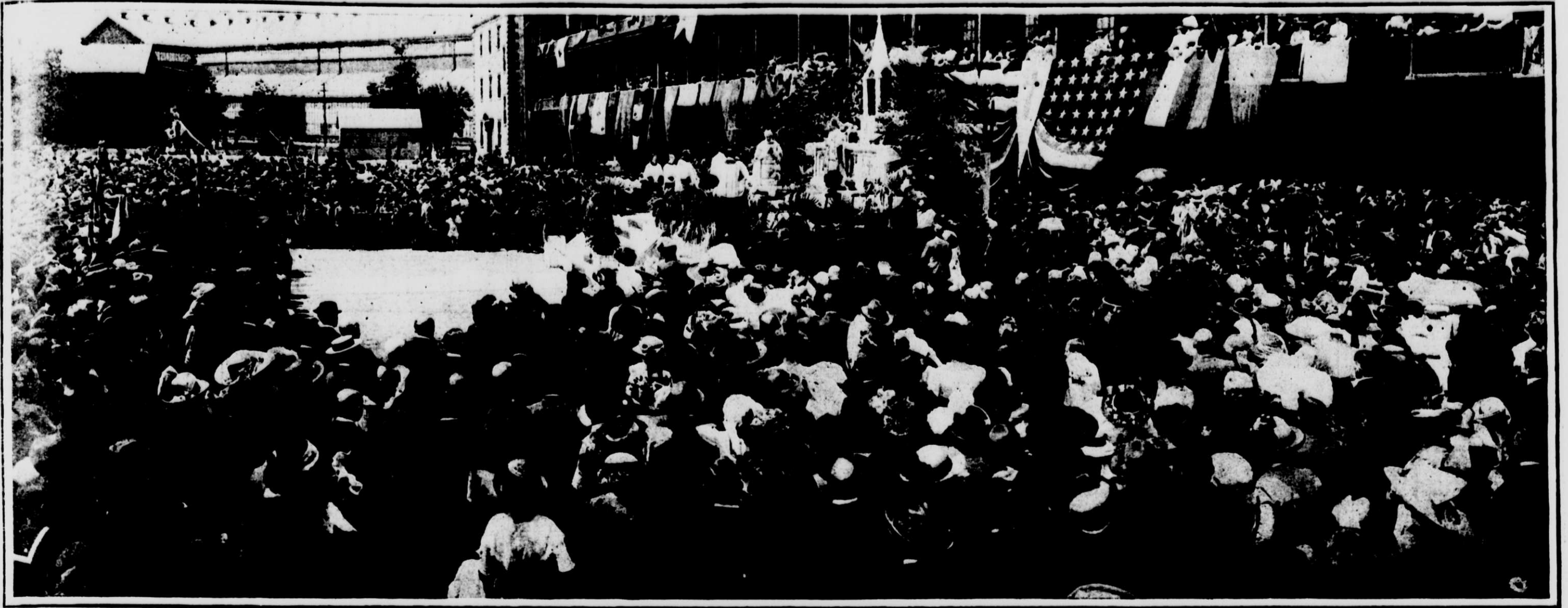


## 12,000 PERSONS ATTEND MILITARY MASS AT BROOKLYN NAVY YARD



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**M**ORE than 12,000 persons gathered at the Brooklyn navy yard Sunday morning, May 25, to attend the services of the eleventh annual military mass for the souls of soldiers lost in battle. The mass was celebrated by the Rev. James J. Cohan, chancellor of the diocese, assisted by the Right

Rev. Mgr. Connolly as deacon and the Rev. W. H. I. Reaney, chaplain in the navy, as sub-deacon. The Very Rev. John P. Chidwick, president of St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, acted as master of ceremonies. A choir of 125 trained voices sang the mass music.

The services were held under the auspices of Gloucester Naval Camp, No. 5, United Spanish War Veterans, and the Long Island branch of the Knights of Columbus. The Right Rev. Mgr. Edward W. McCarty, rector of St. Augustine's Church, preached the sermon.

## Father Curry, Head of St. James's Parish and a Deputy Sheriff, "the Best Policeman in New York"

Has Been Policing His District in Cherry Hill Section for Twelve Years, and Has No Intention of Giving Up Wonderful Work of Keeping It Clean

**S**PEAKER SMITH of the New York Assembly was talking at a meeting in the Cafe Boulevard. The discussion, which was concerned with the New York police and the handling of vice, was lively.

"Shucks!" said the Speaker, who is not only boss of a branch of the Legislature but also one of the young leaders of Tammany, "Shucks! We don't need reformers. More professional reformers live off the East Side than would be needed to patch Second avenue from Fourteenth street to Harlem."

"The best policeman in New York is Father Curry. Start something in his parish and see how long you can get away with it."

It was a conglomerate audience that heard him. In it were Senator Robert F. Wagner, who had just been pleading for the bill creating a board of public welfare to handle vice in the greater city; Sheriff Harburger, Chairman Neu of the State Civil Service Commission, Assemblymen, other Senators besides Wagner, workers from the East Side settlements who did not applaud the reference to Father Curry, and members of the City Club, including representatives of the "high brow Fifth avenue element" whom Senator Wagner had just denounced.

Every one present knew Father Curry, and pretty nearly every one grasped the significance of Speaker Smith's description of the priest as New York's best policeman. Father Curry has been in the police business for twelve years now, and he said recently that he had no intention of getting out of it. He is the head of St. James's parish, which covers the chunk of the lower East Side known as old Cherry Hill. When you walk up Park row or down the Bowery to Chatham Square, turn east on any one of the side streets and start away from the shadow of the dome and you will find yourself in Father Curry's inspection district.

If you will take the street at the southeast angle of Chatham Square, Fifth street, you will come in the middle of the block to a row of old tenement dwellings facing a modern brick house on the north side of the street. A small brass plate on one of the doors will tell you that it is St. James's rectory.

Inside is a large vestibule with two benches and a few pictures which are surrounded by a pen and ink framed notice board. Persons not members of this parish are respectfully referred to their own clergy. It is a legend writ in the air, but if you have no clergy in your neighborhood you must not hesitate to go into the inner door opens and a tall, built man in black with a white head, kindly brown eyes and a beautiful white hair looks in upon you smiling simply: "I am Father Curry."

enough that it is growing harder to attend to all these "duties."

They have been extraordinary in scope. He has followed little children into saloons and put the fear of the law into bartenders who filled the youngsters' pails with beer; he has gone home with the children and made parents squirm for sending their little ones into saloons; he has denounced settlement workers whom he believed to be proselyting among the young of his flock; he has combated settlement workers who painted the East Side in the region of St. James's parish as a slum; he has fought time and again to keep small boys and girls from objectionable picture shows; he has founded a boys' club that is rather famous among such enterprises, and he has closed a few dozen disorderly resorts that dared come too near his parish.

For Father Curry there exists no delicate problem of how far the Church may undertake social service; for him there is no doubt as to the duty of a pastor to promote healthy marriages and to wed only the fit. He was immensely interested when told of a recent vote of Episcopal clergy in New York, six to one, in favor of undertaking the promotion of marriages between suitable young folk.

"You have been in the marriage business a long time—that is, not only wedding but bringing about weddings?" he was asked.

"Oh, yes," the priest replied with a cheerful twinkle. "It is an old story with us."

His boys' club, he said, was holding its own nicely. Yes, the boys have a fine gymnasium, but—

"You know, they tire of that sort of thing," commented Father Curry, with humor. "Now what really makes a hit with them is the dances we arrange for them on Saturday night. They are allowed to bring their girls and it is no trouble to get them to come. It suits us well, for not only does it keep the boys out of tough dance halls but it enables us rather to keep an eye on the company they're keeping."

"Of course we encourage fitting marriages as much as we can. I favor healthy marriages only, to be sure. Health certificates would be an excellent thing. I have noticed that the Italians among us have a tactful way of managing that."

"The Italian father and mother ask the young man who seeks their daughter if he is insured. If he is not they urge him to take out insurance before the wedding and sometimes they insist upon it. They put the argument for it on the usual grounds, the risk of his dying suddenly and leaving his family penniless. But what they are often most concerned about is assurance as to the suitor's good health. They feel satisfied that if he can get insurance there is nothing serious the matter with him."

"Now that seems to me a happy way of dealing with a delicate problem to the satisfaction of all hands and the embarrassment of none."

Father Curry likes Mayor Gaynor and his methods generally, but perhaps his greatest complaint now is about Mr. Gaynor's edict that took away the police captain's plain clothes men.

"I miss those precinct men terribly," said the pastor, his brow wrinkling. "They would do and did do numberless little things to help me keep order in my district. Of them as a class it was said that they took graft. I don't know; maybe some of them did. But they were responsible to the captain and you could get some sort of relief when you went to a police station."

"Now when there is a robbery of any sort, a burglary or any kind of theft, it is useless to go to your police captain. He has the direction only of the uniformed men and is concerned only with open crimes or misdemeanors, deeds of violence, and so forth. In any sort of theft you must go to a detective lieutenant, whose district is not confined to the precinct you live in, but is much larger."

his parish. He said that they are more aggressive than ever.

"Why, do you know," he continued, "there is one settlement down here which takes children away from the district bodily and you cannot get them back except by a writ of habeas corpus. I suppose they get the parents to sign a paper, of whose meaning the parents have not the least notion. I don't know what they do with the children. But even if they send the youngsters away where they will be better off (and I don't believe for a moment anything of the kind), it is truly an extraordinary proceeding, isn't it?"

Irish and Italians make up Father Curry's fold, but the Greeks who live in his parish and crowd to their kaphaneia (coffee houses) to read *Atlantis* and smoke narghilehs and drink kaphes (Turkish coffee) bother the priest not a little.

"Thank heaven, they are less in number," he exclaimed. "Many went home to the Balkan war and some died honorably in battle, no doubt. But they are unassimilable here. They do not bring over their wives and families. Morals? Many of them have none. They ruin boys and girls."

"A little girl not 10 years old confessed to me and told a story of mistreatment by a Greek bartender in a saloon (xythopoleion) to which her parents had sent her for beer. Fortunately it was in a day when the captain had his own plain clothes men and I was able partly to stop children from going to that saloon. Not wholly, no."

"I have followed children into saloons and warned the bartenders. Then they

His War on the Settlement Workers, Whom He Called "Freaks With Fads"; Successfully Campaigned Against Saloon Proprietors Who Sold Beer to Children

have posted men outside to take a child's pail and get it filled and bring it out, so that the youngster may not have to enter the place itself. One had thing about it is that these very little errand runners will take a sip of beer or something stronger on the way home and it gives them the taste for liquor. No one will contend that children of 10 or less should be allowed to drink."

"The movies?"

"Oh, I have had my protest about them in a very long time," replied the priest. "Good picture shows are all right. I like them myself. No, I can't go myself. It wouldn't look well; now, would it?"

"But what I have to protest against, and that constantly, is allowing boys and girls of tender years to see these shows indiscriminately. It is not good for them to go unattended in a darkened house, but not only that but some of the films shown are ruinous for them, especially in cheap houses such as abound down here. I have heard dreadful stories—"

"Most of our criminals are young. They start young, and let a boy once be sent away to an institution and he is pretty nearly done for. You know and I know the schools of crime our reformatories and prisons are. Not only does a boy become skilled in crime, he becomes a moral pervert. I do not know what we are going to do to end these conditions."

"But as to the movies, it is as I told Mayor Gaynor; we do not need any new law, we need only to enforce the one we have. But it seems impossible to keep the children out of these shows. It is a bad day in the matter of children anyway. They seldom have proper discipline. They have their own way too largely."

Father Curry is 56. He says that except for occasional twinges of rheumatism he feels twenty years younger. He was at St. James's for a while back in the '90s and then was moved about a bit, landing at one time at Rhinecliff on the Hudson, where the Astors have a summer home. He had not been back on the East Side more than a few months before he began police work. He closed a notorious resort at Catharine street and East Broadway and got the regular police to drive women who accosted even him out of Chatham Square (which he calls the Dead Sea). Then he denounced policemen in the precinct who were siding with the dives against his boys' club. He closed an illegal resort the rear of which could be seen from the club rooms. The woman who kept it came to the priest and tried to bribe him. He showed her the door.

In 1906 Father Curry interceded for a convicted murderer, Whitey Sullivan, for whom it was thought new witnesses had been found. Sullivan's appeal failed, but the court said:

"I deem it only proper to say in view of the fact that the revolve . . . was originally granted at the instance . . . of the Rev. Father Curry . . . that the proceedings . . . developed the fact that his action was taken from motives of broad humanity and with a desire that justice should be done and that his confidence in the witnesses was entirely misplaced."

Judge James A. Betts was sitting.

When the recreation pier at the foot of Market street was opened in 1904 Father Curry visited it for a while at night until he was able to impress upon the girls of his parish that they must not stay there late and go home alone after 1 o'clock in the morning. Very little girls had been spending most of the night on the pier and complaints had come to the priest about it.

It was in the following year that the pastor of St. James's waged such a war on the practice of sending children to saloons on errands that it was almost done away with in that part of the East Side. Hard on this campaign came a pitched battle with the settlement workers.

On a summer morning of 1906 Father

Curry came out to the altar railing at each of the six masses in his church to denounce the Protestant settlement workers who, he said, were stealing his children and running down his district in order to touch the sympathies and pocketbooks of wealthy people uptown. He named names and praised the Jews for not attempting anything of the sort. He charged that the settlement workers were unable to find the poverty needed for their business or the children for whom they were supposed to do so much. The priest said that of the money collected by these settlements 90 per cent. went for maintenance and 10 per cent. reached the poor.

This elicited from the University Settlement a reply that of \$24,000 collected it had not paid 90 per cent. in salaries, but only \$13,000, or a little over half. Father Curry seemed to think that the reply proved his point that the settlements were inefficiently administered.

He called into the settlement named after Jacob Riis as one of the worst offenders and warned his people not to accept charity but to stand on their own feet. Riis replied that the poor of the East Side had many hardships to endure, but that their greatest hardship was "to have a man like Father Curry as a pastor," at which the priest smiled and replied:

"A good many persons are making a fine, fat living at this settlement and nobody knows it better than Mr. Riis. It is time some one took a stand against these settlement houses with their patent gospel attachments."

He added that in order to get money the settlement workers had so maligned the East Side that his boys could not get jobs, no matter how prepossessing in appearance or manner.

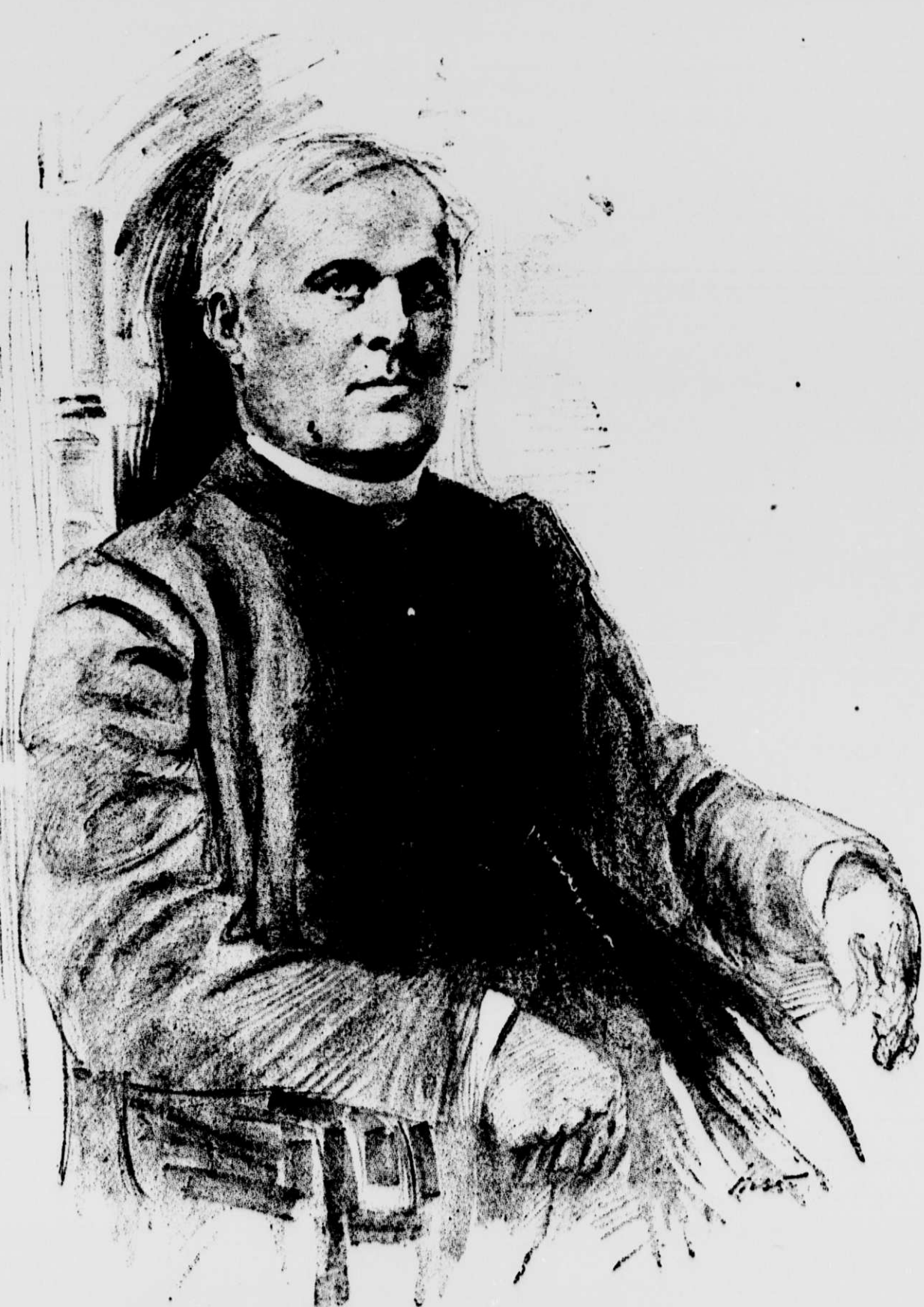
The conflict raged hard two years later when Father Curry said one day: "A little Italian girl of this parish was stolen less than a year ago by the settlement workers. For a week the daily papers had stories of her disappearance, suggesting kidnappers, Black Handers and other terrible things, while the parents were heartbroken. One day the little one was discovered on one of the piers. One of the female workers had taken her into the country for a two weeks vacation without consulting the parents."

"These workers are freaks with fads."

One of the most famous suggestions that Father Curry ever made was that owners of houses should be compelled to put their names on plates in conspicuous places on their buildings. He thought that public acknowledgment of responsibility for an illegal resort or a fire trap of a tenement would bring about a degree of purification in the city. He suggested the "little tin plate" in 1910, and though the measure was killed in the Board of Aldermen it was revived again in 1912.

Probably it will be heard of again, for the efficacy of the plan has commended itself to many leaders in civic work throughout the city. Some of the indorsers of the "little tin plate" last year were the Rev. John H. Holmes of the Church of the Messiah, Walter S. Laidlaw of the Church Federation, John D. Denton of the Labor Temple, Alexander Law of the Tenants Union and Leverett Luce. Dr. John Lovejoy Elliot of the Ethical Culture Society asked why a man should object to fathering his own property; the Rev. Dr. Thomas Slicer said that the little tin plate would benefit the good owner, while working destruction of the bad one, and Col. Roosevelt was quoted as saying that such a label would make owners take a healthy interest in their own property.

About nine months ago Sheriff Harburger, who, like Speaker Smith of the Assembly, the Sullivans and most of the Tammany leaders who keep close to the poor, is Father Curry's friend, made the priest a deputy sheriff, the first case of the kind in New York's history.



The Rev. James B. Curry